Fort Story DUKWs Take to Water In Wake of 'Hurricane Flossy'

FORT STORY, Va.—Amphibious vehicles from Fort Story participated in two separate emergency operations during the high tides and winds which lashed this area following Hurricane Flossy recently.

Two DUKWs from the 604th Transportation Co. at Story, were called from Fort Eustis about 9 p. m., Sept. 26 when the town of Poquoson first seemed to be in danger. The vehicles were in the Poquoson area to participate in a combat support problem at Fort Eustis.

Activities were hampered by widespread electric power failure and high winds, but the DUKWs commanded by 2d Lt. Stanley G. Gold of Fort Story, worked for 12 hours principally picking up children and moving them to safety.

Early the next morning relief vehicles under 1st Lt. Melvin I. Feldman of Story, took over for Gold and his men and remained until mid-afternoon. More than 150 persons were evacuated. At one point, the water was several inches deep in the school in the center of town to which the refugees were taken.

During the emergency, the Fort Eustis commanding general sent two 2½ ton, two 5 ton and three stake and platform trucks from the 100th Light Truck and the 32d Medium Truck Cos. of the 27th Transport Bn. to the area. The Army also supplied blankets and cots for the evacuated persons. The Fort Story and Fort Eustis units worked in cooperation with the Virginia State Police and other military and civilian authorities in the area.

Two other DUKWs, from the 461st Transport Co. at Story were dispatched to the Little Creek Coast Guard Station area shortly after midnight. They were joined by BM2 Robert Jackson of the Coast Guard at the nearby Harbor Defense Unit and proceeded to Willoughby near Ocean View, where they helped in evacuations and stood by until about 7 a. m. in case further assistance was needed. MSgt. Leroy J. Osman was in charge of the vehicles.

HOVERING over a downed L-19 aircraft is this H-21C helicopter, flown by Fort Bragg's CWO James E. Kelley. The copter pulled the plane from the surf despite 40-knot winds, high tides and sheets of rain. The plane crash-landed on a sand bar off the North Carolina coast, and Coast Guardsmen and the Navy were unable to pull the plane to safety before Hurricane Flossie struck.

DURING STORM

H-21 Snatches Plane Off Surf

By A. A. SWENSON

FORT BRAGG, N. C.—Two plucky Army pilots of an H-21 helicopter last week snatched a downed L-19 plane from stormlashed waves on Shakleford Banks near Morehead City, N. C., and carried it slung beneath their 'copter to the Coast Guard base at Fort Macon at night.

Winds up to 40 knots and sheets of rain buffeted the helicopter as it pulled the light plane from the surf and bore it to shore.

"The extremely poor visibility, the rain and low 300-foot ceiling made the job more difficult than we had expected," said CWO James E. Kelley, the rescue copter's pilot.

"Our crew waded through the surf on the sandy shoals, trying to attach the sling to the damaged plane," Kelley added. "Three times the sling slipped as we tried to lift it."

* * *

THE L-19, a National Guard light reconnaissance aircraft piloted by Capt. R. E. Hopkins, crash-landed on a Shakleford Banks sand bar early on a Sunday morning. Capt. Hopkins said the plane developed a vapor lock as he switched fuel tanks, forcing his emergency landing.

Coast Guardsmen at Fort Macon picked up the captain from fishing men, who were the first on the scene. He was uninjured by the crash, but his plane sustained damage to a propeller and its right wing when it nosed over in the soft sand.

Capt. Hopkins was one of a group of National Guard pilots making a weekend training flight along the Carolina coast. Two days of rescue efforts by Navy and Coast Guard crews had failed to recover the L-19 from the sand spit.

* * *

GUARD OFFICERS, fearing that rising seas caused by the advance of Hurricane "Flossie" might wash the stranded plane into the Atlantic, asked for the Army helicopter rescue team from Bragg.

The H-21 with a four-man crew left Fort Bragg's Simmons Army Air Field shortly after noon Tuesday. First attempts to lift the crippled plane from the surf were hampered by tides, wind and rain. Each new effort saw the L-19 spun off balance by winds.

Pelting rain obscured vision during the entire airlift of the plane to the mainland. WO John W. Patterson, co-pilot of the rescue copter, said oscillation of the 2300-pound load slung beneath his craft made the crossing of open water more difficult.

"The weight of the load permitted only Kelley and myself to be aboard during the actual lift. I lay on my stomach to check the best area in which we could safely set the L-19 down," said Patterson, a former master paratrooper of Bragg's 82d Abn. Div.

After delivering their "cargo" to Capt. Melvin K. Goulding, advisor to the Virginia National Guard, who awaited them at Fort Macon, the two pilots flew their copter back to the banks to pick up its rain-and-sea-soaked crew.

Kelley, an experienced copter rescue pilot with 1800 hours of flying time, and co-pilot Patterson, are both members of the 8th Transportation Co. (Helicopter) at Bragg.

Crew chief for the operation was SFC James B. McCrory of the same unit. He was aided by Sgt. Charles T. Sterling, 25th Transportation Co.

Hallmark Assigned

FORT BENNING, Ga.—Lt. Col. Rufus E. Hallmark has been assigned here as a Regimental Committee instructor in the Infantry School's Tactical Department.

Hurricane Inflicts $271,000 Damage on Leroy Johnson

NEW ORLEANS.—Camp Leroy Johnson, a subinstallation of the Gulf Transportation Terminal Command at New Orleans, bore the brunt of howling hurricane Flossy and is a much-mauled sector. An estimated $271,000 worth of damage was done to the camp.

Most of the camp was inundated by the storm that lasted approximately two days last week. The flood conditions were due mainly to Lake Pontchartrain waves pounding over the seawall on the height of a tide 5.3 feet above normal.

Swelling the lake waters, churning through the lake front section, was rain water. There were some 7.59 inches dumped on the city during the storm; catch basins, many of them cluttered with leaves blown from trees, were having a difficult time draining it off.

* * *

DAMAGE REPORTS began to come in on Sunday afternoon, when the first trees were uprooted and electric wires torn loose.

A meeting was held at City Hall, which was attended by the Superintendent of Police, Lt. Col. Thomas Livingston, Executive Officer of Camp Leroy Johnson; and others, who decided it was expedient that amphibious trucks (DUKWs) from Camp Leroy Johnson be put into service. DUKWs were immediately dispatched to disaster locations throughout the New Orleans area.

During the storm, 39 officers and 192 enlisted men from the 394th Transport (Terminal) and TU9222, Camp Leroy Johnson, participated in rescue operations. Fourteen adults and eight children, military dependents, were evacuated and received at Camp Leroy Johnson.

Two hundred and eight families of civilian personnel were evacuated from the lakefront area, while an additional 62 persons, plus 30 automobiles, were evacuated from the adjacent below-sea level areas.

From across the Mississippi River in Algiers, 400 families were evacuated.

Vehicles furnished by Camp Leroy Johnson during the storm included: Four ¼-ton trucks, 22 DUKWs, 15 2½-ton trucks, six ¾-ton trucks, one 5-ton wrecker, two 5-ton tractors with low-bed, and two 2½-ton dump trucks.

Three buildings were equipped to house evacuees at the Camp, and the New Orleans Army Terminal furnished 251 mattresses and 201 blankets to the Red Cross.

An estimated total of damage to the Camp is $271,000, while that sustained by the New Orleans Army Terminal and the Gulf Transportation Terminal Command is negligible.

Brig. Gen. Norman H. Vissering, Commander of the Gulf Transportation Terminal Command commended the officers and enlisted men of the emergency crews, who operated around-the-clock in order to save the lives of evacuees, and who kept property damage to a minimum.

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